

County Santa Cruz  
Improvement Plan Approval Document  
Submitted September 2004

Program Areas	Improvement Plan			Anticipated Date of Completion
	Required		Strategy	
	Yes	No		
<b>Safety:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recurrence of Maltreatment</li> </ul>		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a one-time review of 12 months worth of substantiated and inconclusive referrals that were followed by a second substantiated referral within 12 months.</li> <li>Revise case planning for FM and FR cases so that case plans consistently focus on measurable behavior changes that are required for parents to demonstrate that they can care for their children safely, and not simply the activities that parents must complete in an effort to accomplish the outcomes.</li> <li>Work group of FCS staff and community partners will review best practice information and case planning policies &amp; procedures from other counties and states, and develop guidelines for case planning based on measurable behavior changes. Guidelines will also include how to assess and report on parents behavior change.</li> <li>Improve social worker skills in writing court reports and testifying in court.</li> <li>Develop a training curriculum on court report writing and testifying, partially based on the new case plan policies and procedures to be developed.</li> <li>For all FM cases that continue to be high or very high risk as they approach the anticipated closing date, convene a staffing by the program manager, supervisor, social worker , and other service providers as appropriate, to</li> </ul>	12/31/04  3/31/05  2/28/05  9/30/05  3/31/05

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			<p>consider recommending that the court order an extension of FM services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft a policy and procedure to ensure that a staffing will be held (including the program manger, supervisor, social worker, and other service providers as appropriate) for all cases that continue to be high or very high risk (according to the SDM Family Risk Reassessment) as they approach the anticipated closing date. The purpose of this staffing is to consider recommending that the court order an extension of FM services, and to consider what outcomes and activities should be proposed in the case plan update in an effort to stabilize the family and prevent a recurrence of maltreatment.</li> </ul>	9/30/05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse/Neglect in foster care</li> </ul>		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop local system to track abuse/neglect in foster homes.</li> <li>• Begin implementing new system for investigating child abuse complaints in foster homes.</li> <li>• Develop a system to obtain abuse/neglect in foster care allegation information from probation.</li> <li>• Develop system to track and/or work with CCL on tracking these allegations depending on outcomes of research with state or further clarification from the state.</li> </ul>	<p>10/31/04</p> <p>3/31/05</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely ER Response</li> </ul>		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Worker Visits with child</li> </ul>		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Policy/Procedure on monthly social worker contacts, which address barriers to correct data entry as well as quality of contacts.</li> </ul>	12/31/04

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<b>Permanency</b>				
• Time to Reunification		X		
• Time to Adoption		X		
• Placement Stability		X		
• Foster Care re-entry	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured Decision Making implemented in 2001 has provided standardized tools to assist social workers in determining when to reunify families, and to develop strategies to mitigate safety concerns prior to reunification.</li> <li>• Differential Response</li> <li>• Family Group Conferencing</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>
<b>Well-Being</b>				
• Preserving family relationships			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CalWorks provides temporary financial assistance and employment services to economically disadvantaged families with dependent children. CalWorks social workers also provide case management to some FCS families.</li> </ul>	
• Least Restrictive Placements				
• ICWA Placements				
• ILP			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCS has implemented an innovative strategy with the Children's Mental Health program to address the mental health needs of youth.</li> <li>• FCS and a local community agency provide transitional housing for emancipated minors who have aged out of the child welfare system but still need support to become self sufficient.</li> </ul>	

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<b>Systemic</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Statewide Information System</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Family and Children’s Services Division uses CWS/CMS throughout its practice. The Division is currently participating in a CWS/CMS tune-up. The tune-up will give the Division the opportunity to test the quality of data entry and to make improvements in practices, policies and procedures to ensure that data are entered accurately and into the correct data fields. Frequent analysis of the data also helps determine where staffs need additional training.</li></ul>	On-going
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Case Review System</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>FCS has adopted the Structured Decision Making Tool for use by all social work staff when conducting assessments of risk to children and when engaging in the case planning process. The tool provides specific guidelines for assessing level of risk in order to minimize the influence of subjective conclusion and social worker bias. The “Strength and Needs Assessment” portion of the tool guides the case plan activities designed to aid parents to overcome issues placing the children at risk.</li></ul>	On-going
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Quality Assurance System</li></ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Training</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The County has sponsored cross training between child welfare, probation and law enforcement. The cross training has enabled greater understanding between</li></ul>	On-going

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			<p>the various agencies of the work of their colleagues, how to strengthen collaboration, avoid duplication of effort, increase consistency of response and continue to work together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CORE training is based on CalSWEC curriculum competencies, and includes: Child Development, Interview Skills, Overview of Child Welfare, Organizational Management, Identifying Issues in Child Maltreatment, Risk Assessment (SDM), Substance Abuse, Overview of the Juvenile Court Process, Case Planning and Management, Cultural Competence in Child Welfare, and Placement Issues.</li> </ul>	On-going
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Array</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative collaborations with Community Mental Health Services, as well as community partners, have played a key role in developing and expanding the service array. Supervised visitation, counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse assessment and treatment, mental health services, domestic violence services, housing assistance, and Independent Living Program services are all critical elements of the service array for FCS families.</li> </ul>	On-going
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency Responsiveness to the Community</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCS has focused on several community groups to build a continual presence and base for recruiting foster, respite and support families. The target groups include several faith-</li> </ul>	On-going

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			based communities, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the Diversity Center, serving gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and families in Santa Cruz County.	
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